

2012-2013

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

VI. APPENDIX

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
COUNCIL

FROM: Ruben Torres

SUBJECT: 2012-2013 FIRE DEPARTMENT
VACANCY AND ABSENCE RATES
AND THEIR IMPACT ON OVERTIME

DATE: September 30, 2013

Approved



Date

9/26/13

INFORMATION ONLY

PURPOSE

This annual report on year-end overtime, absence rates and vacancy hours in the Fire Department is prepared in response to the City Auditor's April 2001 "Audit of the City of San José Fire Department's Overtime Expenditures" (Overtime Audit). Overtime funding and relief staffing levels are reviewed annually to ensure they are appropriately measured, funded, and managed. This 2012-2013 report presents absence and vacancy data for the Fire Department, outlines current staffing levels and projected attrition, and provides a discussion of relief staffing based on five years of data (2007-2008 through 2012-2013).

SUMMARY

Total absence hours in 2012-2013 of 348,277 increased by 25% from 278,780 in 2011-2012, resulting in an increase in absence rate from 15.6% in 2011-2012 to 18.7% in 2012-2013. With aggressive recruitment efforts conducted in 2012-2013, the Department's vacancy rate in 2012-2013 was 1.4% (vacancy rate in 2011-2012 was 2.0%). In 2012-2013, the combined absence and vacancy rate was 20.1%, requiring 374,821 hours of backfill¹. Backfill hours are covered by a combination of available relief staffing and overtime.

An increase in 2012-2013 absence hours was largely due to disability and modified duty hours².

¹ In 2011-2012, combined impact of absences and vacancy hours required 278,780 hours of backfill.

² Absence hours increased by 69,497 from 2011-2012 to 2012-2013. Approximately 93% of this increase was due to increase in disability and modified duty hours.

BACKGROUND

Concern regarding the Fire Department's over-expenditures in its overtime budget led to the release of a 2001 Overtime Audit. Prior to 2005-2006, the Fire Department was unable to bring overtime expenditures within its annual overtime budget allocation. From 2006-2007 through 2011-2012, the Fire Department's overtime year-end expenditures were lower than budgeted estimates, and in 2012-2013, the overtime expenditures were within 0.15% of the overtime budget. Through 2011-2012, the Fire Department has reported on its annual vacancy and absence rates and their impact on overtime to the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support (PSFSS) Committee. At the PSFSS Committee meeting on March 21, 2013, the Administration's recommendation to incorporate the Fire Department's annual vacancy and absence rates and their impact on overtime into the Annual Report was approved.

ANALYSIS

In 2012-2013, the Department had 176 daily duty positions. When absences or vacancies occur, relief personnel and/or off-duty personnel are brought back to work on overtime to backfill duty positions to the extent overtime funding is available. When funding is not available, however, certain stations were temporarily closed, otherwise known as "browned out" per previous approved budget balancing actions. The Fire Department's 2012-2013 total overtime budget was \$6.920 million. With construction activities in Fire Station 5 (Old Bayshore Highway), Engine 29 (one of two engine companies on a brown out schedule) was activated daily to mitigate the impact of the temporary relocation of Fire Station 5 personnel to Fire Station 34. As part of the 2012-2013 Year-End Budget Adjustments memorandum, a recommendation was approved to reallocate \$1.1 million in salary savings to overtime funding to address this cost.

The overtime allocation for daily staffing needs (including daily staffing to mitigate the service impact in Fire Station 5's area of coverage) in 2012-2013 was \$5.66 million. Actual expenditures for overtime (including FLSA) totaled \$5.85 million (exceeding budget by 3.3%). With savings in other overtime activities, total overtime expended for the Department was \$6.931 million or \$10,500 (0.15%) over the 2012-2013 budget³. The higher absence rate and need to staff Engine 29 on a daily basis, partially offset by a lower vacancy rate⁴, resulted in higher overtime usage for minimum staffing in 2012-2013 (\$5.8 million in 2012-2013 compared to \$3.6 million in 2011-2012).

The availability of trained SAFER 2011 Firefighters in late 2012-2013 increased the number of personnel available for daily staffing in 2012-2013. Department programs, including the Functional Movement Screening pilot program, which is intended to reduce the frequency of injuries caused by sprains and strains, largest cause of fire injuries, will be in operation in 2013-2014. Increased trained staffing and implementation of wellness programs are expected to reduce absence hours (and reduce overtime costs) in 2013-2014.

³ Overtime costs for portion of June 2013 rolling into 2013-2014 was higher than estimated

⁴ 2012-2013 combined absence and vacancy rate was 20.1% versus 17.6% in 2011-2012

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ANALYSIS***Absence Rates***

The Fire Department analyzes absence and vacancy rates to determine the most efficient relief and overtime complement to meet daily minimum staffing. The following table displays the 2012-2013 absence hours by type of absences and by rank. Absence hours are hours that assigned personnel were not available to fill daily staffing slots due to vacation, illness, disability, modified duty, compensatory time, funeral leave, jury duty, and administrative assignments. For 2012-2013, the Fire Department's absence hours for sworn line personnel in the ranks of Battalion Chief, Fire Captain, Fire Engineer, and Firefighters totaled 348,277 hours.

Chart No. 1
Absence Hours by Type & Rank: 2012-2013

Rank	# of Budgeted Line Positions	Vacation	Sick Leave	Disability	Modified Duty	Misc *	Admin Assign **	Total Hours
Battalion Chief	18	4,596	1,493	2,469	0	481	0	9,039
Fire Captain	151	35,592	22,463	31,806	10,613	1,974	0	102,448
Fire Engineer	214	37,552	25,202	31,612	16,602	1,602	0	112,570
Firefighter	255	35,213	29,088	37,582	19,251	2,326	760	124,220
Total Absence Hours (2012-2013)	638	112,953	78,246	103,469	46,466	6,383	760	348,277
<i>Total Absence Hours (2011-2012)</i>	<i>611</i>	<i>109,907</i>	<i>77,124</i>	<i>67,566</i>	<i>17,551</i>	<i>5,624</i>	<i>1,008</i>	<i>278,780</i>

* Miscellaneous absence hours due to compensatory time off, funeral leave, witness, military, administrative

** Temporary reassignment of line personnel for administrative assignments

From Chart 1, total absence hours of 348,277 in 2012-2013 (including absences due to temporary administrative assignments) increased by 69,497 hours (25%) from 278,780 hours in 2011-2012. This increase is driven primarily by increases in absence hours due to disability and modified duty.

With 638 line positions in 2012-2013, total absence hours were equivalent to 548 absence hours per line person (compared to 455 in 2011-2012). Although these absence hours are not always taken in full-shift (24-hour) increments, the 2012-2013 absence level was equivalent to about 22.7 shifts per line person (compared to 2011-2012's 18.9 shifts).

Vacancy Rates

Vacancies in sworn ranks occur due to retirement from the organization or separations from employment. In 2012-2013, the Fire Department's emergency response line positions were vacant for a total of 26,544 hours, or 1.4% vacancy rate. Aggressive recruitment efforts in 2012-2013 included lateral recruitments. At the end of June 2013, there were no net vacant sworn positions⁵.

⁵ The vacant Assistant Fire Chief position was offset by an overstrength Firefighter position

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ANALYSIS***Backfill for Duty Positions***

On a daily basis, absences and vacancies in duty positions are supplemented with relief personnel and/or off-duty personnel who are brought back on overtime to backfill duty positions. Total absence and vacancy hours in 2012-2013 required 374,821 hours of backfill. In 2011-2012, the combined absence and vacancy rate was 17.6% requiring 313,836 hours of backfill.

Chart No. 2
Absence and Vacancy by Rank: 2012-2013 vs 2011-2012

Rank	2012-2013 Total Hours	2012-2013 Absence Hours	2012-2013 Vacancy Hours	2012-2013 Hours Requiring Backfill	2012-2013 Total Absence & Vacancy Rate	2011-2012 Absence & Vacancy Rate
Battalion Chief	52,560	9,039	0	9,039	17.2%	17.8%
Fire Captain	440,920	102,448	9,632	112,080	25.4%	20.3%
Fire Engineer	624,880	112,570	7,840	120,410	19.3%	17.1%
Firefighter	744,600	124,220	9,072	133,292	17.9%	16.4%
Total	1,862,960	348,277	26,544	374,821	20.1%	17.6%

Staffing Levels and Anticipated Retirements

In preparing projections of near-term and long-range vacancies, staff analyzes sworn personnel's years of service and age ranges and, based on various retirement eligibility scenarios⁶, prepares staffing projections. For 2013-2014, staff projects 20 sworn retirements. One recruit academy class would be sufficient to meet this number of projected sworn retirements (an academy could consist of up to 30 recruits). At the end of June 2013, there were no sworn vacancies. This has provided the department with the opportunity to update its list of eligible Fire Fighters (last Fire Fighter list was established four years ago). Included in these efforts are outreach programs that target an audience base that is representative of the community. Applications are being accepted in Spring 2014 for an anticipated August 2014 Recruit Academy. A Candidate Forum will be held on Saturday, October 26 at the San Jose Convention Center. This will be an opportunity for candidates to gather additional information and have face-to-face interactions with Department personnel and other public safety/emergency response partners.

⁶ Retirement eligibility scenarios include 30 years of service at any age; 50 years of age with 25 years of service; and 55 years of age with 20 years of service

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Relief Staffing

To summarize, when a daily staffing position is unfilled, either due to an absence or a vacancy, the position must be backfilled in order for a company to remain in service. There are three ways in which this can occur: overtime, relief personnel, or by higher-classing someone in a lower rank to backfill the position (which also then requires backfill). Staff plans the use of the Department's budgeted overtime funding level based on relief staffing and on assumptions on absences and vacancies. (The Department's relief model is described below.) If vacancies exceed staff estimates, a recommendation to reallocate savings from vacant positions to overtime is brought forward for City Council consideration. If absences exceed staff estimates, staff will determine if funding can be reallocated from other budgeted activities. If additional funding to staff units on an overtime basis is not available, a brown out situation would occur. In 2012-2013, the Department managed its resources to ensure that no more than two units were taken out of service each day, as budgeted.

The Department's relief model estimates the number of relief positions needed to backfill absences and vacancies when there are the fewest hours of absence and vacancy during the year (baseline). The baseline is the lowest number of absence and vacancy hours used by the personnel in each rank in the 2012-2013 pay periods. Once the baseline is established based on the actual absence and vacancy data, it can then be determined, by rank, how many relief positions should be staffed. The 2012-2013 baseline hours (lowest absence and vacancy hours that occurred in any pay period) excluding Battalion Chief positions⁷ are as follows:

- Fire Captain = 3,314 hours (in 2011-2012 = 2,045 hours)
- Fire Engineer = 3,455 hours (in 2011-2012 = 2,824 hours)
- Firefighter = 4,111 hours (in 2011-2012 = 3,089 hours)

Consistent with prior years' reports, to determine baseline hours by rank, five years of data by rank on absence and vacancy hours are used to smooth out potential anomalies in any given year. Utilizing this methodology a comparison of the vacancy/absence baseline hours and coverage hours by relief staff is presented in the following table.

⁷ Consistent with prior reports, Battalion Chief positions are excluded from baseline analysis due to the number of duty positions (15 for 3 shifts)

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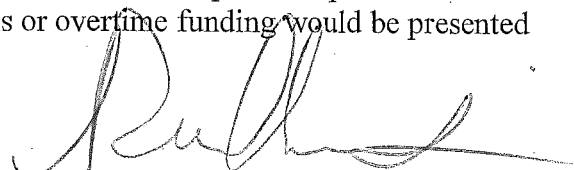
*Chart No. 3
Average Five-Year Baseline Data and Relief Personnel (Hours)*

	Average Absence and Vacancy Hours Baseline	Coverage by Relief Staff	Coverage by Relief (shortfall)/surplus	Relief Staff Needed to Cover Average Baseline Absence and Vacancy
Fire Captain	2,978	2,800	(178)	1.6 FTE needed
Fire Engineer	3,521	3,360	(161)	1.4 FTE needed
Firefighter	3,318	3,136	(182)	1.6 FTE needed
Total	9,817	9,296	(521)	4.7 FTE needed

Utilizing the chart above, five year's baseline analysis could lead to a conclusion that five relief positions would be required to cover absences and vacancies. Prior years' analyses have led to adjustments in relief staffing for Fire Engineers and Firefighters. In this five year-period (2008-2009 through 2012-2013), there were two years with disability and modified duty hours that neared the 150,000 hour level⁸. With two out of five years reflecting higher absences, the results of the analysis could be skewed. The Department will continue to monitor absences and look to programs such as the Functional Screening Movement to reduce absence hours.

CONCLUSION

Higher absence hours experienced in 2012-2013, largely attributed to increased disability and modified duty hours, have resulted in an increase in hours required for backfill through use of relief personnel and overtime. Utilizing the Department's five-year baseline methodology analysis, it would appear that an additional five relief staffing would be required. As pointed out earlier, the high disability and modified duty hours for two of the five years impacted the results. The Department will continue its analysis of absences, relief staffing, and overtime usage, including potential impact of its safety and wellness initiative programs (e.g. Functional Movement Screening FMS). The Department continues to work with employees and other partners to improve employee safety and reduce absences and its impact on services to the community. Programs such as FMS and the safety/wellness program are intended to improve employee safety and reduce impact of absences to service levels. Upon completion of staff analysis, recommendations, if any, to adjust staffing levels or overtime funding would be presented during the 2014-2015 budget process.


RUBEN TORRES
Acting Fire Chief

⁸ Disability and modified duty hours have been monitored, since 2005-2006. In six of the eight years, disability and modified duty hours averaged below 100,000 hours. In 2008-2009 and 2012-2013, disability and modified duty hours were at the 150,000 hour level.